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ABSTRACT

An innovative project of cooperative evaluation by principals and teachers of their schools was initiated in 1977 in over 70 large primary schools throughout Queensland, Australia. The background and purposes of the project are described and a schedule for a school evaluation project is suggested. A booklet "A Guide for Cooperative School Evaluation in Queensland Schools" is cited as a source of flexible criteria for evaluation. (Author/MLF)

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CO-OPERATIVE SCHOOL EVALUATION IN QUEENSLAND PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Early in the seventies, the changing educational scene made a re-definition of the role of the inspector of schools a vital necessity. In earlier decades his main function was to appraise teachers and inspect and write annual reports on the schools in his district. He appraised all teachers from the highest classified principal to the humblest unclassified teacher on the school staff. His advisory role received scant attention because, as he was a man of scholarship and wide experience in an age when teachers were ill-prepared for their vocation, his advice was a directive.

With the raising of minimum qualifications for entrance to the teaching service, a longer period of pre-service education, the introduction of in-service courses, the growing professionalism of the teaching service and the devolution of the responsibility of the supervision of schools to the principal, the advisory and consultative function of the inspector became of paramount importance. In Queensland, the Director-General of Education at the time set up a Working Party to consider the role of the inspector of schools with regard to personal appraisement of teachers, promotional procedures, appointments and transfers, and new approaches to school evaluation. This Working Party consisted of representatives of the Queensland Teachers' Union and The Queensland Institute of Senior Education Officers (the professional organization which replaced the Institute of Inspectors of Schools). Three joint Union-Department sector committees were formed to examine existing practices and make recommendations on -

(a) School Evaluation;
(b) Personal Appraisement of Teachers;
(c) Appointments and Promotions of Teachers.

Within two years recommendations were received and implemented from the sub-committees considering (c) and (b) above. Their reports and results are now well known to Queensland teachers and administrators.

The chairman of the sub-committee on Co-operative School Evaluation is an inspector of primary schools and the other three members are a principal of a large primary school (secretary), a deputy principal of a large secondary school and an inspector of secondary schools.

From the start it was anticipated that the group working on School Evaluation would be engaged in a project of a much longer duration. This sector committee was required to consider the following Terms of Reference -

1. To delineate the aims and purposes of school evaluation;
2. To examine and evaluate existing methods of school evaluation;
3. To examine methods of school evaluation in use elsewhere;
4. To examine new approaches to school evaluation;
5. To make recommendations regarding suitable methods of school evaluation for use in Queensland primary, special and secondary schools.

In response to Term of Reference 1, it was decided that the basic assumption underlying School Evaluation is that it is one means of improving the quality of education of the children of the State.

The Aims and Purposes of School Evaluation determined by the sub-committee were -

1. The need for evaluation of school performance is part of the accountability of the school system to the community. There is need for the Minister of Education:
   .to ensure that value is being obtained for money expended;
   .to see that there are sound principles, processes and methods operating in the school;
   . to gauge the degree to which pupils are achieving stated goals in knowledge, skills and attitudes.
   The Minister, through the agency of the Education Department, has the responsibility of providing the resources necessary for the educational process.
2. School Evaluation should:
   .help teachers to achieve the highest possible level of competence and professionalism;
   .ensure that resource materials (human and otherwise) are used fully and to their best advantage.

Purposes

School Evaluation should ascertain whether -

(a) the school is a vital part of the community;
(b) through the implementation of changing curricula there is an ongoing adaptive system in our schools to meet the demands of a dynamic society;
(c) the school is a transmitting agent for the culture of our society;
(d) effective methods are being used to see that the school is fulfilling its function as an educational institution; that these methods teach children to think and to make valid judgements;
(e) there is a good school climate that is conducive to effective teaching and learning

The main task of the sub-committee related to the fourth and particularly the fifth Terms of Reference.

Methods of evaluation in use elsewhere provided little assistance as, in the main, there was little difference from those in operation in this State. The concept of Co-operative Evaluation (the assessment of a school by the principal and the staff) with the inspector (s), acting as consultants, was decided upon as the focus for a suitable method of School Evaluation in Queensland. In developing the scheme now in use, classroom teachers, principals and assistant administrators in all classes of primary schools and senior administrative officers of the Department of Education were consulted for advice and guidance.

In the initial stages of the project, the committee decided to seek the co-operation of certain principals, who could be relied upon to test, without bias, an innovative scheme of co-operative evaluation. These principals were known to possess outstanding leadership qualities as it was imperative that the whole-hearted co-operation of the staff at each of the invited schools be secured. The invaluable assistance given by these principals during the trialling and in the subsequent development of the scheme is sincerely appreciated by the committee.

Mr. Pat Hearn, Principal of Inala State School, who participated in the trialling, prepared a report on the study of organizational development undertaken in his school. He was assisted in the preparation of this report by Mr. Doug Ogilvie of the University of Queensland. Their article "Operation Stocktake - A Case Study of Organizational Development in a Primary School", appeared in the Administrators' Bulletin in May, 1973.

Four schools were involved in the trialling. Limited guidelines only were given because it was considered essential that as little restriction as possible be imposed on the programs in order to ascertain the different means that teams of professional educators would adopt to evaluate their own educational programs. To preserve these differences, the schools were requested to refrain from communicating with each other during the period of planning. This request was strictly observed.

Following an analysis of the programs submitted by the participating schools and discussions with the staffs involved, it became evident that teachers strongly favoured the establishment of guidelines which would set down flexible criteria and point up desirable evaluation practices.

With the assistance of these principals the criteria set out in "A Guide for Co-operative Evaluation in Queensland Schools" were evolved and refined during further progressive trialling in over twenty other large schools within and outside the State system.

During 1977, over seventy large primary schools throughout Queensland are undertaking co-operative evaluation of their schools which is a three year project.

Co-operative School Evaluation is a form of organizational development, a particular type of planned change because it involves the systematic examination of a complete organization, the development of plans of action and the implementation of those plans.

It is based on the premise that a self-renewing school is adaptive and responsive to the need for change. It is capable of stating its own goals and willing to do so, makes full use of the interests and expertise of the staff members, implements decisions that are arrived at in participative discussion-making, and continually evaluates the success or otherwise of its programs.

As with any type of planned change, there are basic principles which ensure its success. The whole staff must be fully aware of its purposes, have a common interpretation of the criteria, and have developed a modus operandi that is streamlined to ensure that it does not become too time consuming. Only when these preliminary requirements have been met will the school team develop the program with the degree of commitment essential to its success. It cannot be too strongly stressed that time spent in achieving these vital necessities will result in the successful achievement of the ultimate purposes set out in the booklet.

The interest and support of hierarchical leaders is also required. A successful program will be achieved only by this type of commitment by senior officers.

A school which has special sub-committees (e.g. in subject areas) or grade representative groups has been involved in some form of co-operative school evaluation in limited areas. In such a school, a climate favourable to organizational development activities of this type already exists.

There is little doubt that teachers need to develop skills and attitudes in the collaborative problem-solving approach. It is hoped that pre-service programs in the future will include courses to develop these necessary attitudes and skills.

Schools have the responsibility of serving the needs of pupils during their most formative years. In order to fulfil this responsibility, there must be periodic evaluation of the educational program provided by the school and the system. This process must include the study of policy, programs, procedures, attitudes, and assess them against the philosophy and objectives of the school as well as against the nature and needs of the pupil population.

The booklet "A Guide for Co-operative School Evaluation in Queensland Schools" contains flexible criteria for evaluation of the measure of the extent to which the school is actually accomplishing what it is trying to do.

Suggested criteria are provided under the following categories - Personnel, Organization, Services and Facilities, Instructional Program (all study was in the Queensland primary school curriculum), Instructional Processes (public relations, planning, organization, evaluation) and Community Involvement. Each of these sections contains a list of items which reflect desirable practices. These are accompanied by a rating scale to record evaluation of specific items.

It is hoped that this evaluation will serve to stimulate team discussions regarding effective practices, focus attention upon desirable standards, and provide a broader and clearer concept of the character and function of any effective school.

In general, the ultimate purposes of co-operative school evaluation are-

(i) clarification of educational aims and objectives;
(ii) improvement of instructional programs;
(iii) increased competence of personnel;
(iv) better utilization of facilities;
(v) improved co-ordination of total staff effort.

The degree to which these aims are accomplished will determine the extent of improvement opportunity in a particular school.

The following is extracted from the section of the booklet providing guidance for the use of the rating scale -

Check each item (✓) in the appropriate column using the following evaluation scale:

E If the item is judged to be effective.
SI If the item is judged to be in need of some improvement.
MI If the item is judged to be in need of major improvement, whether within, or beyond, the school's control.
L If the item is judged to be lacking but desirable or essential.
NA If the item is judged to be not applicable.

Provision has been made for inclusion of criteria to suit the needs of the schools and it is strongly recommended that schools develop criteria for their unique situation.

In evaluating its school practices a staff might proceed in the following way -

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE - ONE YEAR CO-OPERATIVE SCHOOL EVALUATION PROJECT

	Suggested Time Allocation
INITIAL EVALUATION	
1. Acquaint the staff with the project 2. Clarify objectives 3. Form committees to: . discuss criteria (with provision for additional criteria) . conduct evaluation . collect data . analyse data . report to evaluating team 4 Determine action for improvement	2 months
WORKING FOR IMPROVEMENT	
Direct staff effort towards eliminating weaknesses as identified.	5 to 6 months
SECOND EVALUATION	
1. Discuss criteria (with additions if necessary) 2. Conduct evaluation as before 3. Collect data 4. Analyse data 5. Measure progress achieved	1 month

FOLLOW-UP	
1. Prepare written report including: . recommendations for further action . formulation of plans for continuous evaluation	1 month
2. Implement recommendations	

During the second and third year of the three year cycle, it is suggested that the school staff undertakes the solution of problems identified during the two evaluations. Such problems may be associated with orientation of the beginning teacher, more effective communication concerning the effectiveness and use of resource material, the Health and Physical Education program in the school, parent education and the like. It is envisaged that the result of such corporate efforts by the school team will be communicated to colleagues in education journals such as "Quest" to assist them if they have a similar problem.

This "follow-up" stage is most important, for only where there are observable results will a staff feel that its efforts have been worthwhile.

It should be understood that a co-operative evaluation is directed towards initiating improvements in the operations of the school rather than providing a report on the condition of the school.

Extracts from evaluations of the scheme by principals and staffs involved provide useful guidelines for the future -
(i) "The school still has a long way to go before the staff and principal form a real teaching team. Pride in being able to handle one's own classroom is most desirable but it can be a barrier to the development of a co-operative teaching team.
This underscores the assertion that skills and attitudes need to be developed. Otherwise teachers will continue to be skilled and competent in the classroom situation but inadequately prepared for Organization problem-solving.
(ii) Communication between upper school and lower school needs strengthening. Fragmented teaching is evident in the school in areas such as music, social studies, physical education, and research skills.
(iii) Co-operative evaluation makes the school a more compact and understanding unit - teachers think of the school as an entity and not only of their own areas.
(iv) Co-operative evaluation helps to discover where weaknesses lie and fosters co-operation by the whole staff to solve problems.
(v) It brings school administration and teaching staff closer and promotes better understanding in the school. It may make the administration aware of problems that would otherwise be overlooked.
(vi) It brings to the attention of all staff members that there are materials for use in the school of which they had not previously been aware. In short, Co-operative Evaluation generally helps to overcome the communication gap.
(vii) Co-operative Evaluation gives teachers a chance to look at themselves critically and honestly.
(viii) It makes teachers aware of where their opinions differ from the norm and should cause in these cases some degree of

personal reassessment.
(ix) It tends to lessen parochialism in various parts of the school.
(x) It gives teachers a whole school spirit and causes them to think of each subject program as a school program and not as a grade program."

The following guidelines supplement those listed in the booklet -
(i) The key to co-operative evaluation is by the judicious use of small staff committees for each section.
(ii) In evaluation meetings, round table situations with quick inputs should enable the organization of necessary responses with minimum delays.
(iii) In the individual's evaluation of criteria, the automatic response is the one required. It is unwise to spend time pondering over the most suitable response and debating the interpretation of the criteria.
(iv) Care should be exercised to ensure the best use of available time. It is imperative that a minimum of time be expended in collating the information in any section, and that time is purposefully used in discussion situations.

On account of the demands made upon the teachers' time, it is not recommended that this shceme of evaluation be modified for introduction to a one-teacher school. However, the guidelines, criteria and suggestions in the document should prove invaluable in clarifying teaching objectives and in assisting the principal of such a school to apply his particular methods of evaluation more effectively

It is now generally accepted that systematic school evaluation is a co-operative effort, that it is most successful when teachers and inspectors move together through each of the several steps required to complete the task and that it will be most effective if a plan has been co-operatively developed and accepted as a basis for growth.

Professional trust and co-operation are seen as end products of this new approach where administrators, principals and teachers join in providing the best possible education for the children of Queensland.